

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 HA-05 /074 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9545

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGUI 2585

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CT, US

SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH EMPEROR BOKASSA

REF: STATE 281261 (NOTAL); BANGUI 2524 (NOTAL)

1. EMPEROR BOKASSA RECEIVED ME IN HIS BANGUI OFFICE EARLY ON THE EVENING OF NOVEMBER 25 FOR THE PRESENTATION OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S CORONATION GIFT AND LETTER. FOREIGN MINISTER GBEZERA-BRIA AND CHIEF OF PROTOCOL BONGOPASSI WERE THE ONLY OTHER PERSONS PRESENT.

2. AFTER AN EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES, BOKASSA OPENED THE LETTER AND READ IT ALOUD TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER. IT WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT WHAT HE HAD HOPED FOR BOTH IN ITS REPEATED REFERENCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND IN ITS INDICATION THAT I WOULD BE THE US DELEGATE TO THE CORONATION. BOKASSA LOOKED SOLEMN AT FIRST BUT RALLIED GAMELY AND SAID THAT HE HAD TAKEN CAREFUL NOTE OF THE PRESIDENT'S POINTS AND WOULD WORK IN THE SPIRIT OF OPENNESS, FRANKNESS AND FRIENDSHIP WHICH THE LETTER CALLED FOR. HE ASSURED ME THAT HE ALSO ATTACHED IMPORTANCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS (EXCEPT, HE SAID, PARENTHETICALLY, WHERE TERRORISTS WERE CONCERNED), HE WOULD BE GUIDED BY THE

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE. BOKASSA REITERATED THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD MADE THIS POINT EXPLICITLY IN HIS INTERVIEW ON FRENCH TELEVISION, WHICH APPEARED ON THE 23RD. HE SAID HE HAD INDICATED HIS REGRET FOR LAST SUMMER'S INCIDENTS AND HAD STATED THEY WOULD NOT BE REPEATED. (HE COMMENTED THAT THE INTERVIEW HAD GONE WELL AND THAT PRESIDENT GISCARD HAD TELEPHONED HIM AFTERWARDS TO CONGRATULATE HIM.)

3. DURING THE MEETING I WAS ABLE FROM TIME TO TIME TO INSERT A NUMBER OF POINTS MAKING CLEAR THAT WE CONTINUED TO WATCH THE SITUATION IN THE CAE CLOSELY. I NOTED WITH SATISFACTION HIS RECENT SPEECH CALLING FOR AN END TO BRUTALITY AGAINST PRISONERS (BANGUI 2471) AND HIS SPEECH THE DAY BEFORE, WHEN HE INAUGURATED THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL, IN WHICH HE SAID THAT THE COUNCIL WAS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS RESTORING BASIC INSTITUTIONS IN ORDER TO "ASSURE THE DEFINITIVE LIBERALIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION" OF THE REGIME. I SAID THESE STATEMENTS, WHICH I HAD DRAWN TO WASHINGTON'S ATTENTION, WERE VERY MUCH IN THE SPIRIT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER. I ALSO STATED THAT WE WERE SATISFIED WITH THE DIALOGUE WE HAD BEGUN AND APPRECIATED THE FRANKNESS WITH WHICH WE HAD BEEN ABLE TO DISCUSS THE GT&E PROBLEM (BANGUI 2221). I HOPED WE COULD DISCUSS FUTURE PROBLEMS IN THE SAME SPIRIT. BOKASSA WAS QUICK TO SAY THERE WERE NO OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS AND HE SAW NO REASON WHY THERE SHOULD BE ANY IN THE FUTURE.

4. I ALSO DREW BOKASSA'S ATTENTION TO OUR VOTES AT THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FUND, NOTING IN PARTICULAR THAT OUR EARLIER ABSTENTION REFLECTED OUR HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS. I SAID, HOWEVER, WE WERE GOING TO VOTE FOR THE HEALTH LOAN WHICH WOULD DIRECTLY BENEFIT THE PEOPLE OF CENTRAL AFRICA.

5. WHILE WE WERE SKIRTING THESE SENSITIVE ISSUES, THE CHIEF OF PROTOCOL WAS UNWRAPPING THE GIFT. BOKASSA WAS CLEARLY DELIGHTED
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WITH THE FOUR PLATES. HE SAID THEY WERE MUSEUM PIECES WHICH HE WOULD TREASURE. HE ASKED THAT HIS PERSONAL THANKS BE CONVEYED TO PRESIDENT CARTER.

6. AS I STOOD UP TO LEAVE AND WITH BOKASSA HOLDING ME FIRMLY BY THE HAND, HE SAID WITH FERVOR THAT HE INTENDED TO KEEP VERY MUCH IN MIND THE POINTS WHICH PRESIDENT CARTER HAD MADE IN HIS LETTER.

7. COMMENT: BOKASSA WAS LESS ANIMATED AND EFFUSIVE THAN USUAL AND SEEMED VERY TIRED. HE IS CERTAINLY PREOCCUPIED WITH CORONATION PLANS AND FROM WHAT WE KNOW HAS BEEN SUPERVISING ARRANGEMENTS ALMOST DAY AND NIGHT. HE WILL HAVE LITTLE TIME NOW TO FOCUS ON BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH US. THE PRESIDENT'S EXTREMELY USEFUL MESSAGE CAPS THE DIALOGUE WITH BOKASSA WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON WITH INCREASING FRANKNESS SINCE LAST AUGUST. HE CERTAINLY KNOWS WHERE WE STAND AND SEEMS PREPARED TO WORK CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH US ON THAT BASIS. ONLY TIME WILL TELL WHETHER HE WILL IN FACT PERMIT AND LIBERALIZATION OF HIS REGIME OR WILL MOVE TO LESS REPRESSIVE HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES.
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